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# Children's Advocacy Center of Pierce County

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Manager



# What is a Children's Advocacy Center?

- First CAC was founded in 1985 in Huntsville, Alabama
  - Robert “Bud” Kramer
- Vision for a coordinated approach
  - Work was being duplicated
  - Children were being interviewed multiple times
  - Systems unaccustomed to working together
- Founded on the belief that child abuse is a community problem
  - No single agency designed to meet needs of child abuse victim on their own
  - Systems need to collaborate and share information

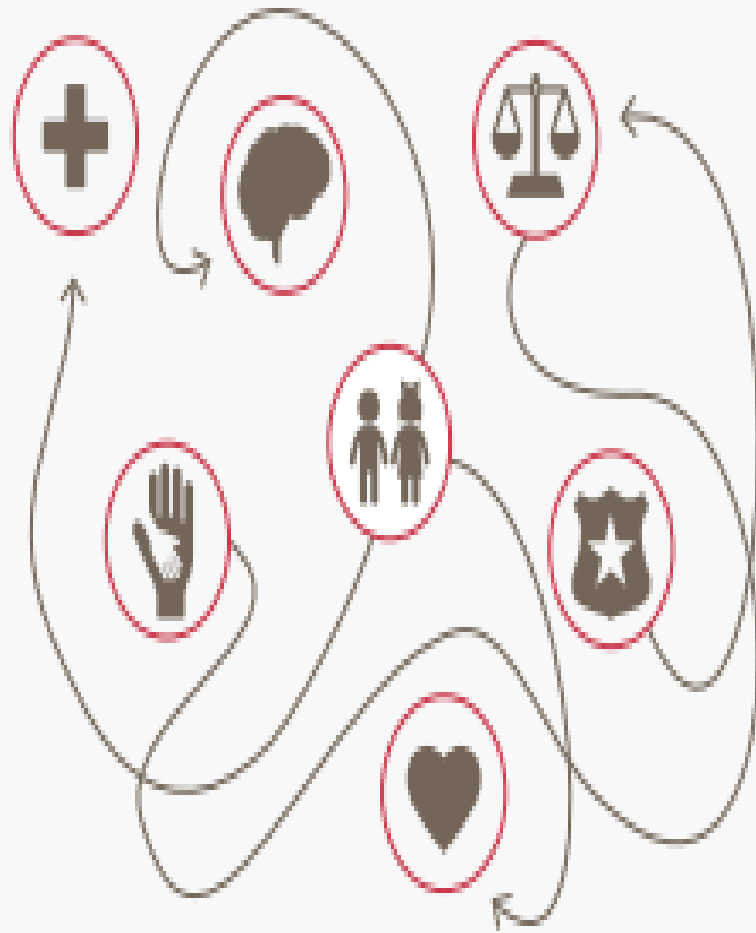


# What is a Children's Advocacy Center?

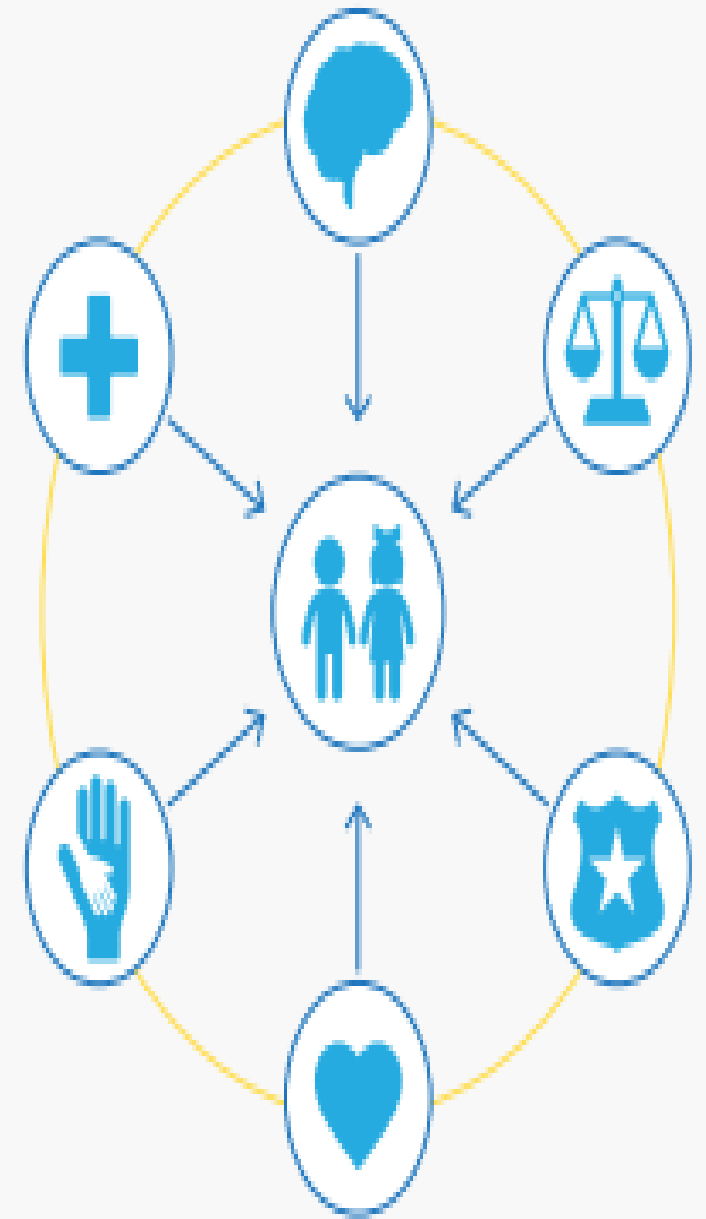
- Child centered, neutral, and safe environment where a team of various disciplines collaborate to provide services to child victims and their families while allegations of abuse are investigated
- Goal to reduce the number of times a child is interviewed
- Leads to more successful prosecution outcomes
- Over 900 CACs located throughout US & abroad



Without  
CACs



With  
CACs



# Child Sexual Abuse

- More prevalent than many realize
  - 1 in 4 girls, 1 in 13 boys conservatively (CDC, 2022)
- 90% of victims know their abuser
- Many victims never tell
  - 60% of child sexual abuse survivors never tell anyone (Survivor Space)
- Most children do not show any signs or symptoms of abuse, even when it's happening
  - Fewer than 5% of cases have medical evidence of abuse (Anderst, et al., 2009)
- Many people do not disclose until adulthood
  - Average age for disclosing child sexual abuse is 52 (Survivor Space)
- Delayed disclosures are common
- Children often give partial disclosures
  - May disclose more if they have support to do so
- False reports are rare

# Prevention

## How to talk to children about abuse and offender behaviors

- Include sexual abuse in any other regular “safety talks”
  - Ex. water safety, helmets, seatbelts, etc.

## Hot Chocolate Talks

- 0-5 years: “Can you point to the parts of your body covered by underwear? They’re covered because they’re private”
- 6-8 years: “Even if someone seems nice, it’s not okay for them to ask you to keep a secret about touching”
- 9-10 years: “If anyone ever makes you feel uncomfortable, you can tell me. I will believe you.”
- 11+ years: “It’s always okay to say ‘no’ even if you’ve already said ‘yes’. Your feelings and safety come first.”

**Hot Chocolate Talk® Campaign | Committee for Children ([cfchildren.org](https://cfchildren.org))**  
**[hot-chocolate-talk-2023-conversation-guide.pdf](https://cfchildren.org/hot-chocolate-talk-2023-conversation-guide.pdf) ([cfchildren.org](https://cfchildren.org))**

# What to do if you learn a child has been abused

- Believe and support them!
- Stay calm
- Reassure them it is not their fault and they are not in trouble
- Keep them informed about what will happen next, as much as possible
- Don't make promises you can't keep
- Let them know you will do everything in your power to protect them
- Report the abuse immediately to **local law enforcement** and call CPS at **1-866-END-HARM**
- Get help for your child and yourself
  - Children's Advocacy Center of Pierce County
    - (253) 403-1478
    - [www.piercecac.org](http://www.piercecac.org)

# What else happens at the CAC?

- Social work interventions & support
- Referrals to therapy and advocacy
- Targeted interventions by age of child
  - Social Determinants of Health, Period of Purple Crying, safe sleep, perinatal support, childhood safety information, sexual assault prevention education
- Mental health screenings for youth
- Caregiver support group
- Community education & training



# Resources

- Children's Advocacy Center of Pierce County: [www.piercecac.org](http://www.piercecac.org)
  - **253-403-3789**
- 1 in 6: [www.1in6.org](http://www.1in6.org)
- Rebuilding Hope! Sexual Assault Center of Pierce County: [www.rebuildinghope.org](http://www.rebuildinghope.org)
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)
- National Children's Alliance: [www.nationalchildrensalliance.org](http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org)
- Hot Chocolate Talks: [www.cfchildren.org/resources](http://www.cfchildren.org/resources)
- Information about age-appropriate sexual behavior; insight on dealing with problematic sexual behavior:
  - Toni Cavanagh Johnson: [www.tcavjohn.com](http://www.tcavjohn.com)
  - National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth: [www.ncsby.org](http://www.ncsby.org)